



Subject: RB No. 347 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE'S OPEN SPACE PLAN

As a representative of The Connecticut Audubon Society, I would ask your support of RB 347, An Act Concerning the State's Open Space Plan.

In 1997, the General Assembly set a goal of preserving 21 percent of the land area of Connecticut as open space for public recreation and for natural resource conservation and preservation. The statutory goal is for 10 percent of the state's land area to be acquired and held by the state of Connecticut, and for 11 percent to be acquired by partners (municipalities, non-profits, and watershed lands). We have made great strides toward accomplishing this open space goal (though progress is currently being hindered

by the adverse economic situation). However, we really don't have an ongoing inventory of open spaces, including how they are being protected and what conservation goal they meet. No town, for example, reports to the state when it acquires a conservation easement from a development project, and no analysis is available as to what, if any, conservation goal is achieved. A one-acre conservation easement in the center of a 40-lot development may add to the state's open space acquisition goal and serve another town objective, but does it really serve a conservation purpose, such as, for example, having a positive effect on a declining songbird population?

We need to understand how much land we require to meet our conservation goals, how much of what we already have meets those goals and, therefore, how much land we need to acquire and where it is located.

An effective plan would enable all of us who acquire conservation land (state, towns, land trusts, NGO's) to focus on acquiring property that accomplishes a specific goal (in our case, wildlife habitat) and moves us all toward our larger objective.

Revising this plan has been a top priority of the Society since 2010 (http://www.ctaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/SOTB2010Report_Final.pdf) when we recognized a need to better understand where all known protected public and private lands are located in Connecticut, the usefulness of these lands for protecting species of conservation concern, and a need to identify and prioritize lands that need to be acquired in order to protect habitats of greatest conservation needs.

We believe this bill will effectively help to accomplish these goals and, importantly, provide for regular revisions that will increase the ability of the state to meet its open space goals set by the General Assembly.

We urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Milan G. Bull
Senior Director of Science and Conservation
Connecticut Audubon Society
2325 Burr St.
Fairfield, CT 06824
(203)259-6305, ext. 111
mbull@ctaudubon.org

The Connecticut Audubon Society is an independent, statewide organization with over 10,000 members. Our mission is to conserve Connecticut's environment through science-based education and advocacy focused on the state's bird populations and their habitats. We have offices throughout the state in Pomfret, Glastonbury, Milford, and Fairfield.